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CHAPTER III

EMIGRATION TO THE 'NANYANG'

THE overseas Chinese are almost exclusively drawn from the southeastern provinces of Kwangtung, Fukien, and Kwangsi—the great majority from the first two. This has mainly been due to population pressure and to the contiguity of these provinces to Southeast Asia.[1] This emigration was accentuated by internal troubles in China. In the Ming dynasty there had already been substantial emigration to the Nanyang, but a new wave was set up by the civil strife consequent on the change-over from the Ming to the Ch'ing, or Manchu, dynasty.[2] For example, the anti-Manchu pirate and patriot Koxinga, who had occupied Formosa, made descents on the coasts of Fukien in order to replenish his stores and at the same time embarrass the Manchu Government. Partly to cut off his supplies and partly to intimidate the population of these regions whose sympathies were anti-dynastic, the Manchus made the latter forsake a zone of country from about eight to thirty miles deep on the coasts of Kwangtung, Fukien, and Chekiang. This zone was denuded of its crops and its villages were burnt down. A reference was made to this in the reign of the first Manchu Emperor when governors were ordered to give houses and land to such persons who had moved into the interior 'so that they might be satisfied'. The harsh treatment they received was undoubtedly an encouragement to many in these parts of China to seek refuge overseas.

Contacts with Europeans were also a subsidiary encouragement to emigration. The first European efforts to trade were centred in Kwangtung. In 1516 Perestrello came from Malacca to China; in 1517 de Andrada arrived in Canton and received permission from the viceroy to trade. The attitude of the Portuguese soon aroused the hostility of the Chinese and their trading depot was attacked and destroyed in 1522. They retired to Lampa in Kwangtung where

[1] Population pressure in China, especially in the nineteenth century, is instructively dealt with by G. E. Tyler, 'The Taiping Rebellion, its economic background and social theory', *Chinese Social and Political Science Review*, vol. xvi (1933) pp. 545–614.

[2] See J. J. L. Duyvendak, 'Chinese in the Dutch East Indies', ibid. vol. xi. (1927) pp. 1–15.

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they maintained a trading post for the next fifty years. Another expedition reached the coast of Fukien in 1518 and established depots at Ch'üanchowfu, north of Amoy, at Foochow, and at Ningpo in Chekiang. Between 1545 and 1549 an imperial edict for the extermination of the Portuguese was enforced wherever possible. Nevertheless Macao was founded as a trading post in 1557. The Portuguese paid rent for the Macao Peninsula until 1849. During the eighteenth century Macao was the chief port for the Western trade in China. The Spanish next opened up direct relations with the Chinese, using Manila as their base, but the trade between the Philippines and Amoy was almost entirely in Chinese hands. The port of Amoy from 1730 to 1842 was closed to all foreigners except Spaniards. The Dutch made attempts to open up trade at Canton in 1604 and 1607 but were defeated by the Portuguese interests at Macao. Though they eventually occupied Formosa, they were driven out by Koxinga in 1661. Further efforts made by the Dutch to obtain recognition of their trade were without success, and it was not until 1762 that they were able to establish a factory at Canton. The English made their first essay to join in the trade in 1596, but it was a failure. They tried in 1647 to operate under Portuguese auspices, meeting, however, with little success. The East India Company renewed the attempt to trade with Canton in 1664 and 1674, but were foiled, mainly by the Portuguese. The Company did, however, succeed in 1667 and 1670 in trading at Amoy and Formosa, but their factory in the latter place was closed in 1681. In 1685 an imperial decree opened all the ports of China to foreign trade; but Canton and Amoy remained the principal trading entrepôts.

A circumstance which tended towards centring the foreign trade on Canton and eventually confining it to this one port was the establishment of a monopoly by the Chinese Government. In 1702 an official called a Hoppo, or emperor's merchant, was appointed at Canton and became the sole broker for all purchases and sales. Two years later the Hoppo had to admit certain other merchants into a share of his monopoly. Henceforth the trade increased in bulk and flourished, though subject to very severe restrictions and a rigorous disciplining of the foreign merchants, most of whom had to withdraw to Macao in the non-trading season. In 1757 an imperial edict prohibited all foreign trade at any port other than Canton. Attempts to improve the conditions of trade and to establish relations on a proper footing led to the sending of embassies to

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Peking by the Dutch and the British, but without concrete result. The situation continued down to the First China War of 1839–42.

It will be seen, then, that Chinese contacts with foreign traders were practically confined to the Kwangtung and Fukien ports, though the intercourse was even then a restricted one. It was not the policy of the Spanish or of the Dutch (except at the beginning) to attract the Chinese to their colonies; it was only after 1786, when the British began to make settlements in the Malay Peninsula, that the Chinese found an unqualified welcome. The capitalistic development of colonies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had not yet begun, and there was no demand for coolie labour on a large scale before then. The Americans first traded with Canton in 1784, but it was not until 1848 that the first Chinese immigrants arrived at San Francisco.[1]

Such were some of the circumstances which induced, or paved the way for, Chinese emigration to the Nanyang. Our task must now be to investigate the factors which discouraged this emigration.

Ancestor worship was a strong force in discouraging the Chinese from emigrating. The spirits of the dead needed the constant attendance of the living to ensure their welfare, and those who deserted the vicinity of the graves of their ancestors and left their spirits without sacrificial offerings and ritual attention were guilty of unfilial conduct. Thus it was at all times that only those who were forced by dire necessity left their native villages, and they were regarded as outcasts and vagabonds. It was natural, therefore, that a great many refugees and criminals should have been included among the emigrants.[2]

Religion was reinforced by Government policy. The Emperors took the view that the loss of subjects was not a loss to be compensated for by any trade advantages. Under the Mings the law was not so strict as it became later under the Ch'ings (the Manchus were also more orthodox Confucians than the Mings—and aliens are frequently more orthodox and conservative than the people

[1] So it is commonly stated, but in the correspondence relating to a project to send Chinese to Trinidad in 1806 ('Notices of Pinang', *Journal of the Indian Archipelago*, vol. vi (1852) pp. 145–72) it is mentioned that Chinese had already been taken to Nootka Sound in North America. The writer has so far been unable to discover the facts of this matter.

[2] H. Gottwaldt, *Die Uberseeische Auswanderung der Chinesen* (Bremen, Max Moessler, 1903), insists that 'only the scum of the Chinese go abroad'.

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and other expenditure demanded by custom. Moreover, the money-lenders are willing to advance money without the security demanded by landbanks and co-operative societies.

In the matter of trade monopoly it is true that in Siam, Indo-china, Indonesia, and the Philippines the Chinese have a virtual monopoly of the rice distribution and milling trades. The Govern-ments of these countries have, to meet the popular agitation, passed legislation to restrict the Chinese share in this trade. The fact that the Chinese maintains his position in face of all this legislation and in face of competition, fair or unfair, is simply because he is so much more competent in the business. Florence Horn (see p. 634) points out that the Filipino politician who charged the Chinese with having half the retail business in their hands changed his ground completely when the reply was made that all the Filipino had to do was to open up a *tienda* on his own and put the Chinese out of business. He then said that the Chinese standard of living was deplorably low, he eats almost nothing and works day and night; therefore he subjects the Filipino to unfair com-petition! At the same time it must be admitted that the Chinese, having obtained virtual control of some trades, do their best to keep them in their hands and usually employ only their own countrymen. This is naturally galling to the native looking for an opening, but there is a sound business reason for it. They employ their own people because they are, on the whole, better at the job. No European merchant would maintain that a firm should be compelled to employ persons of inferior business capacity, thus exposing the firm to the danger of bankruptcy.

If the Governments of Southeast Asia wish to secure a greater share of the trade of their country for their nationals, they are entitled to legislate accordingly—provided, of course, that the law does not operate harshly or unjustly by depriving an alien of one source of livelihood before he has had a chance of acquiring another. (The economic effect on a country of discriminating against aliens who discharge some useful function is another matter.)

In *Fanny's First Play* Bernard Shaw pokes fun at the critics who will not give an opinion as to the merits of the play until they know 'Who wrote it?' The inference is that such a question is an irrelevance, and that the play should be judged on its own merits. But while we have, so far, attempted to consider the charges